

**Bagua, 14 January (ANDINA).** Japan's Ambassador to Peru, Shuichiro Megata, and the Minister for the Environment, Antonio Brack, inaugurated this afternoon the Mini Bamboo Crafts Center (MINCABAMBU) in the district of Aramango, province of Bagua, in the Amazon region. The Center will give value added to the species and will improve the quality of life of the population.

This initiative is part of the project PD 428/06 Rev.2 (F) "Promoting the rehabilitation, management and sustainable use of bamboo forests in the northwestern region of Peru", financed by the Government of Japan through the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and implemented by the Peruvian Bamboo Association (PERUBAMBU).

Aramango is home to the country's largest natural formations and plantations of bamboo of the *Guadua angustifolia* species (Guayaquil cane or marona) in a habitat that is under the constant threat of expansion of the slash-and-burn agricultural frontier on the hill slopes where, as a rule, bananas, coffee and corn are being grown.

"This project is primarily aimed at the rehabilitation of the species but it also seeks to establish new plantations to ensure their sustainability and increased value added. Furthermore, it will help to avoid deforestation in these areas", explained Dr. Josefina Takahashi, Executive Director of PERUBAMBU.

Dr. Takahashi indicated that the project has helped to train 45 families who, after opting to ensure the conservation of their bamboo forests, have established the Bamboo Producers Association of Aramango.

"There are between 300 and 400 hectares of bamboo forests in Aramango, but the idea is to establish 200 additional hectares", she said to **Agencia Andina**.

Project beneficiaries were trained in propagation and forest management techniques and are participating, on an ongoing basis, in bamboo propagation and plantation establishment activities as well as in the management of existing forests with the support of project technicians.

"They have also been given technical assistance on processing and construction techniques", added Dr. Takahashi, indicating that the training was provided by specialists from Colombia and Ecuador, two countries that have the same species and are well advanced in this type of projects.

The Mincabambu Center, built on land belonging to the Aramango Municipality, is seven meters high and has an area of 350 square meters. "This center was built with the assistance of these specialists and the active participation of the local population", she informed.

The bamboo training and processing center will be located in this building. In other words, this is where the Center's activities will be conducted, including bamboo selection, insect treatments, and manufacturing of panels, crafts and furniture, among others.

"The implementation of this center has created awareness among the communities of the value of the resource as a construction material, because they have seen how easily it can replace bricks and mortar to build structurally sound, decent houses, with savings of up to 50%", indicated Dr. Takahashi. She pointed out that the project began in 2009 and was also implemented in some provinces of the department of San Martin.

In this regard, the Minister for the Environment, Antonio Brack Egg, said that bamboo is one of the best plants known to control erosion on degraded soils and to avoid landslides and landslips. "Furthermore, it is one of the most versatile plants that can be produced, as it can be used in construction, crafts, to build water-pipes and more", he stated. "The owners of bamboo plots in the region tell me that this activity now provides them with additional income and the demand for bamboo is increasing as it is now being used to make parquet flooring and toothpicks, among other products", said the Minister. "Therefore, bamboo has an incredible future because it is a species that is easy to grow, even in degraded areas. That is why I am very pleased that this bamboo promotion project is being implemented", he stated.

The event participants included the Regional President of the Amazon Region, Jose Arista; the mayors of Bagua and Aramango, Ferry Torres Huaman and Ramos Paucar, respectively; the representative of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), John J. Leigh, and other officers.